

Sunday October 10th, Twenty-Eighth Sunday In Ordinary Time Year II

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

And it looks like it's going to be a lovely day, so I hope we can all make the most of it.

And once again we have beautiful Sunday readings with Isaiah 25:6-10 describing the Kingdom of Heaven, which is echoed in the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14.

Throughout the Scriptures heaven, eternal life, life in the Kingdom of God is often described as a wedding feast or banquet, a time of rejoicing, a time of celebration. As with funerals, with weddings, the Jewish people knew how to celebrate: wedding feasts would last a number of days; the bride and groom would change the clothes on many different occasions, and true to form, there would be much rejoicing with wonderful food and wine. A wedding feast then, does indeed seem a wonderful way to describe the Kingdom of God, and Mary Berry would be hard put to come up with a more mouth-watering description than that of Isaiah in the first reading: *'The Lord of hosts will prepare for all people a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines, of food rich and juicy, of fine strained wines.'*

Despite such a wonderful offer, those who had been invited in the parable Jesus tells us today were either not interested, going off to their farms or their business, or are for some reason threatened or angered by the invitation, going so far as to even kill the servants. When those who were first invited refuse to come, other people nearby are invited to come instead, and they do indeed take up the offer. There is a rather sombre postscript to this parable (or two parables, really) as a man is summarily removed for not wearing a wedding garment.

It's easy to read the parable as a history of salvation. The People of God were invited to become members of the Kingdom of Heaven, the fine banquet and all of that. But due to apathy, fear or whatever, people constantly rejected the teachings of the prophets and of Jesus himself. The treatment of the servants in the parable does indeed correspond to the treatment handed out to all of the prophets, they were killed because of the message of Good News that they brought. And people nearby were invited to respond; the gentiles, the non-jews.

Each of us, has of course, been invited to this wedding banquet of the Lamb of God (as the Book of Revelations likes to call it). But just as we have been freely invited, we have the freedom to reject that

invitation. The reasons given in the parable for the rejection are hardly dwelt upon, asking us to think about the times we have rejected all that God has given to us. The farm and the business perhaps suggest people who are too busy to want to spend time with God, or too bogged down with material things, with money and what have you, to think that this great feast matters. The people who kill the servants with the message seemingly do so with no reason whatsoever. Are they scared? Do they object to what they say? Whilst we are lucky enough to be able to celebrate our faith in this country, even with the present restrictions, it is not the case (two thousand years after the birth of Christ) everywhere in the world. And still there are many people in this country who would seek to, not kill us for our beliefs, but kill our beliefs, weaken our faith, take us away from the banquet, proclaiming other so-called truths. Whilst, as I said, it is easy to read this parable as the history of salvation, we must also see ourselves as part of that history, and remind ourselves of our invitation, and our response to the banquet of Christ.

And what a wonderful invitation we have all been given, and what a wonderful opportunity to accept. But, we're forgetting the slightly sombre note which the parable finishes on, the man ejected for not wearing the right clothes. Whether we take this as a caution that, even within the Church there are people who are not truly wanting to be in the Kingdom, or whether we read this as a reminder that despite our invitation we still have to make an effort to work and strive in the faith to which we have been called, the invitation is there. Let us not be too busy, or apathetic, nor casual in our response, but wholeheartedly respond so that we are not just among the called, but, hopefully and gratefully, among the chosen.

*Lord, teach me to offer you a heart of thanksgiving and praise
in all my daily experiences of life.*

*Teach me to be joyful always, to pray continually
and to give thanks in all my circumstances.*

I accept them as Your will for my life.

I long to bring pleasure to Your heart daily.

Break the power of the enemy in my life – whatever that may be.

Change my outlook and attitude with my present circumstances.

'I will give thanks to the Lord because of His righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens' (Psalm 7:17-18:1).

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

So how can we sum up this message with a hymn today? How about 'Here I am, Lord', offering our service to the Almighty in response to his wonderful invitation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

Mentioning Mary Berry I should of course have said *Dame* Mary Berry, as she has just received one of the country's highest accolades for telling us how to bake a cake and scolding us for our soggy bottoms. I must admit I don't really understand the honours system. Top business people who have already had the reward with their gazillions in the bank, seemingly random celebrities who at this moment seem to be in the public eye, and sporting people who get a gold medal, which, I thought, is what they are supposed to try and do anyway. At least this year there do seem to have been several awards for people who have gone out of their way to help people in the last few months, but, like the widow in the Gospel who put in the smallest coin, which was all she had, everything is very, very relative. If I could confer an award on all of YOU for supporting those in need so wonderfully over the last few months - and I haven't even started on a Christmas project yet - I most definitely would. To be honest I think we should all get a Knighthood or Damehood for what we have all been going through to the best of our abilities in the past few months. But then, as W.S. Gilbert said in 'The Gondoliers': 'When everyone is somebodee then no-one's anybodee.' And make of that what you will.

Having said all of that I still think it's a disgrace that Elaine Paige has never been made a Dame. And if that is not a reason to publish a picture of the First Lady of Musical Theatre herself, what is?

Here's three verses from the Bible for those who feel they have been overlooked:

'We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew that later on he would be glad he did. Now he is seated at the right side of God's throne! So keep your mind on Jesus, who put up with many insults from sinners. Then you won't get discouraged and give up.' Hebrews 12:2-3.

'Our foolish pride comes from this world, and so do our selfish desires and our desire to have everything we see. None of this comes from the Father. The world and the desires it causes are disappearing. But if we obey God, we will live forever.' 1 John 2:16 -17

'Do your work willingly, as though you were serving the Lord himself, and not just your earthly master. In fact, the Lord Christ is the one you are really serving, and you know that he will reward you. But Christ has no favourites!' Colossians 3:23-25

I've just come in from Mass, and it was so lovely to see everyone. As I said at the beginning, it's a beautiful day, so let's make sure we make the most of it.

This morning's mass was recorded (and I am *definitely* perkier than I am at 5pm in the afternoon) and thanks to our techno wizard Ian is available on the YouTube at <https://youtu.be/BGYDUVLTzYo>
Texts for each day can be found at <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). Any suggestions for ways to keep our faith and spirits up at this time are most welcome!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed, though the building is, most of the time. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.